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CHARDIN AND HIS TIMES

Original in the Louvre. Photo. Neurdein.

J.-B.-S. CHARDIN.
HIS OWN PORTRAIT.

CHARDIN
AND HIS TIMES

BY

HERBERT FURST

GOWANS & GRAY LIMITED
5 ROBERT STREET, ADELPHI, LONDON, W.C.
58 CADOGAN STREET, GLASGOW
1907

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PREFACE

THIS little volume needs a few words of explanation, for, properly speaking, it is not a book, as which it appears, at all. It was originally written and delivered as a lecture, in April, at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. Nevertheless, I venture to say that it has a "raison d'être" even in its present form, if only the reader will bear in mind that it is primarily a lecture delivered to an audience of a peculiar complexion. I was consequently not concerned with original research, nor would I weary my hearers with the technicalities of an

art; my one and only aim was to interest them, to take them away from themselves, and to accomplish that without transporting them into a fairyland of fiction. If I succeeded, it was due to Chardin alone, for he, if anyone, can teach how to extract poetry from work-a-day life and pleasure from the humblest subjects.

I give this little book then as a modest thanks-offering to the genius of Chardin, hoping that it will help to extend the appreciation of his art.

HERBERT FURST.

ST. JAMES' SQUARE, W.,
May, 1907.

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CHARDIN AND HIS TIMES

When Mr. Aitken, the director of your gallery, asked me, a few weeks ago, to come here and talk to you about Chardin, I was delighted not only for the honour he was doing me thereby, but also because I feel that amongst all the manifestations of art in the eighteenth century there is nothing more appealing, nothing saner, that is healthier, nothing deeper and sincerer than the work of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin.

In order to appreciate his pictures (or for the matter of that any objects of our vision), it is necessary that

we should allow them to develop in our mind in two progressive stages. In the first they pass through our senses and create emotions, in the second they pass into our intellect and create thoughts.

You have had the privilege of seeing in this exhibition one or two very beautiful examples of Chardin's art, and you have already consciously, or perhaps almost unconsciously, formed an opinion about it.

With your permission I will now try to examine the reason why this master's work should so strongly appeal to me and no doubt please you so well.

Firstly, then—What emotions does it create?

Even the least artistically experi-

enced will have noticed the great restraint and quietude emanating from Chardin's canvases. Modest and unpretentious in choice of subject, subdued and quiet in colour, without violent contrasts of light and shade, their effect on our senses is of a calm and soothing nature. Beholding these pictures, we are, as it were, transported from the din and turmoil of the streets, from the glare of the stage-lights to the peace and stillness of a home. We need not ask the meaning of this or the purport of that, we need not confess to ourselves our ignorance of this historical or that poetical reference, nor are we distracted by objects or colours unfamiliar to our sight. Even the costume of another period we

scarcely notice, so true does his art ring, so direct is its appeal to us. Well, that is a sure sign that it is great and true art. Chardin is not only a great painter but also a great poet: the poet of home life—wife, mother, child, truth, innocence, harmony, peace, order, brightness, cleanliness, happiness, such are the emotional qualities of his art, and these qualities quite as much as the means by which he creates them, that is his technique, form the fascination and excellence of his art.

Let us suppose we had never heard of the man, and had just discovered this picture (see Plate 2). Attracted by the sweet harmony of colour, the graceful ease of the pose, the

Original in the Hermitage. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

J.-B.-S. CHARDIN.
LA POURVOYEUSE.

very spirit of home that like an invisible net contrives to keep the work together, we examine it and notice a signature: J. Chardin, and a date 173. and something. We may conjecture now that he was a Frenchman of the time of Louis XV.

The time of Louis XV.: let us pause a moment and try to realise what that means.

Louis XIV. is dead; all France breathes again, for the overpowering personality of the late king, in whose mouth the famous "L'état c'est moi" (I am the state) was no mere figure of speech, had lain like an incubus on all hearts. Friends and enemies of the throne were equally rejoiced, the latter teeming with hopes for a

new era, the former glad to be rid of a master whose service had become tediously exacting. The new era did certainly not come at once, but the gulf between the ruling and the ruled grew ominously wide and wider. Meanwhile, the aristocracy, glad to be rid also of the pomp and circumstance of the sun-king's court at Versailles, sought happiness in personal ease, comfort and luxury. But these aristocrats were tired people; fervour of any kind they abhorred as vulgar. The Titanic energy of the Great Renaissance was impossible to the Rococo, which had been nourished on the bathos of the Baroc. For splendour and pompousness the new age exchanges luxury and comfort. The

vast halls with gilt columns, heavy curtains, and the gilt clamour of over-elaborately carved furniture are forgotten in the perfumed atmosphere of cosy boudoirs hung with silken hangings and furnished with tapestry-covered lounges and sofas, with slim-legged tables and chairs, and cabinets filled with the thousand and one knick-knacks so characteristic of the period. Frail porcelain ousts bronze and marble, and a selfish age prefers the mirror to the painted picture. Art, once a preacher of religion, next a herald of princes, had now become the handmaid of all who could afford to pay. Venus, who had donned the garb of a Madonna when she was forced to leave Olympus,

who had in the immediately preceding age assumed once more her place amongst the gods of the newly awakened Pantheon, descended to the boudoirs of the rich in the guise of a dainty snub-nosed little Parisienne. With the death of the grand monarque, Louis XIV., the great French carnival began—gently at first, with the mincing step of the minuet, culminating in a wild cancan of debauch and ending in a deluge of blood: the deluge Louis XV. or his marquise had meant when they uttered their cynical "après nous le deluge," the deluge in which the inoffensive Louis XVI. lost his royal head under the guillotine.

Aristocracy is dead, and the new manifestations of life—under the stony

Original in Earl Spencer's Collection. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

ANTOINE WATTEAU.
HIS OWN PORTRAIT.

pallor of Napoleon in the political world; under the icy rigidity of David in the art world—belong wholly to Democracy.

Such, then, in rough words, was the character of the times in which Chardin lived—though he died just before the great upheaval. To gain a clearer insight let us now see who his brothers in art were.

First and foremost: Watteau.

Watteau was *the* painter of the age.

We have here (see Plate 3) his own portrait, which shews us a slim, somewhat sickly youth with dreamy eyes and a smile of which it is difficult to say whether it is cynical or sad. He is playing a hurdy-gurdy in

spite of his glorious contemporaries, Bach and Handel.

Inspired by Flemish art, such as Teniers's, he developed out of it an art entirely his own, as much his own as he was a typical child of his time: of delicate health, of nervous temperament, his pictures breathe the delicate, nervous temper of the times.

You have seen in this Exhibition his first picture, which is entirely reminiscent of the earlier Flemish master. This other one (see Plate 4), which I am shewing you here, is in the Wallace Collection. It is called a "Return from the Chase"; it seems, however, to represent "A Rest," "An Interval during the Chase." In

Original in the Wallace Collection. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

ANTOINE WATTEAU.

THE RETURN FROM THE CHASE.

Original in the Louvre. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

ANTOINE WATTEAU.

L'EMBARQUEMENT POUR L'ILE DE CYTHÈRE.

fact, it is scarcely possible to label and docket Watteau's subjects; the more one examines them, the less do they appear to have any reference to real life; they are of such substance as dreams are made of. All his art seems subservient to love, not the brutal life force beloved by Rubens, but a dainty, tired, capricious little goddess, who is wooed not by strength, courage and manliness, but by soft music, witty speech and whispered words of love.

His "Pilgrims Embarking for the Island of Love" (see Plate 5), or to give it the French title it is known by, "L'Embarquement pour l'Ile de Cythère," which was his reception picture at the Academy and gained

him his title as Maistre Peintre des Fêtes Galantes, is commonly called his masterpiece, but for myself I prefer this (see Plate 6) unpretentious little gem of the Wallace Collection. It comes so near to truth and is yet as far removed from it as our dreams of happiness are from reality. It is called "La Fontaine." The Fountain of Love, we add, love the life force as symbolised by the fountain itself through the capering goat. Never was there a purely sensual picture more refined, more filled with the sense of mystery of love and all it means. Watteau was a great and, despite appearances, a thoroughly sincere lyrical poet. This cannot be said of his followers, such as Lancret

Original in the Wallace Collection. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

Antoine Watteau.
La Fontaine.

Original in the Wallace Collection. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

FRANÇOIS BOUCHER.
CUPID A CAPTIVE.

and Pater, much less of others who painted in a similar, though noticeably coarser, vein.

But there is another kind of art characteristic of the age of Louis "Le Bien-Aimé": Boucher's, to be sure.

"Cupid a Captive": I have chosen this (see Plate 7) picture because of all the typical originals I know it seems to give most of the good qualities of his art and least of the objectionable ones. The original is at the Wallace Collection, where a good and representative collection of his works may be seen. No man has understood to render better the purely sensual fascination of the female form, which he so much admired that he invested the Cupids even with its

grace. His Cupids are typical, nearly every canvas "swarms" with them. A rather unpleasant pinkiness and a pale greenish blue are the prevailing notes of his colour-scheme—very different from the warmth of Watteau's tones.

There is over each and every picture of Watteau's a haze of sadness, a silent lament. Not so with Boucher, in whom the vitality and energy of the great Old Masters seems revived. For Boucher was not only a painter of allegorical subjects: he was everything. A master of applied arts, a scene-painter, a landscape gardener, a fashion-plate designer; he made china figures, clock-cases, vases, chandeliers, mantelpieces; he supplied sketches

Original in the Wallace Collection. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

FRANÇOIS BOUCHER.

LA MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR.

for sculptors, ivory-workers, goldsmiths, jewellers, he designed theatrical costumes; he painted mural and ceiling decorations, classical pictures, portraits and *fêtes galantes.*

To shew his ability as a portrait painter, I have chosen one of his portraits of "La Pompadour," his protectress (see Plate 8). Observe the great ease and delicacy with which he has mastered the folds and flounces of the Marquise's elaborate costume. Observe, too, how impudently he flatters her, by making the eyes about double the natural size, and exaggerating the Cupid's bow of her lips without any reference to truth.

However, he was a great craftsman,

from whom so conscientious and serious a painter as Sir Joshua Reynolds could not entirely withhold his praise, though he blamed him, as we may well imagine, for painting without the living model. Had he lived in a different age he might have been a greater master; as it is, the uncouth utterings of a Giotto, or the child-like naïveté of a Fra Angelico, are worlds above the meretricious ability of a Boucher, who could produce in a few minutes a more able piece of craftsmanship than they in their life-time.

There are, of course, many other painters approaching either Watteau's or Boucher's style, but they are not of sufficient importance from the

Original in the Wallace Collection. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

JEAN-BAPTISTE GREUZE.
SORROW.

point of view that we are taking, with the exception of one man—Greuze.

Greuze is to-day principally known as the painter of pretty girls' heads (see Plate 9). He delights in depicting that fascinating age in which childhood seems on the brink of departing, and womanhood just entering the girl's soul. It is an age that in the abstract or in art may be very beautiful, but its beauty, I am afraid, is entirely in the imagination of the painter-poet.

It is difficult to-day to be just to Greuze, even for his unmistakable good qualities as a painter pure and simple, for these to us are overshadowed by his seeming insincerity,

a kind of canting morality, which, however, must have suited the taste of his age, seeing that Diderot extolled it so mightily.

Here is an example of his almost mawkish sentimentality, "L'Accordée de Village" (The Village Bride) (see Plate 10). At a first glance it looks like the return of two Prodigals, or in any case an event of very unusual occurrence. Nothing of the kind; it is simply bride and bridegroom in a happy family circle. Wherefore all this display of tearful sentiment? There is a touch of unintentional humour in the dispassionate way the bride has placed her arm in the groom's, and the firm grasp in which the latter holds the marriage portion.

Original in the Louvre. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

JEAN-BAPTISTE GREUZE.
L'ACCORDÉE DE VILLAGE

Still no one can deny that, individually considered, his types are truthful and characteristic.

A very clever and most interesting writer on matters artistic, Richard Muther, calls Greuze the French Hogarth, which he is in a sense, for both were painting moralists, and both were better artists when they did not preach.

But whereas Hogarth preached his Philippics with furious eloquence in towering rage, Greuze preached with the tearful eye, the quivering lip, the humble mien of sentiment. That is why we cannot help distrusting Greuze's morality, and are apt to judge even his decided good qualities, namely, a certain ability to express

character, and his delicacy of colour, rather too harshly.

There is one other artist who should not be left out of any survey of art in the eighteenth century—Fragonard—once a pupil of Chardin. Yet, able artist though he was, we must count him after all only as an improvement on Boucher and the earlier men—so also we can afford to omit Jacques Louis David—as belonging not to this but the beginning of the next century.

Watteau, Boucher, Greuze, these are the three prototypes of eighteenth century art.

And Chardin—is he not typical? Emphatically no. Chardin is more, he is a master of all ages.

To prove this is the task I have

set myself this evening. But before entering into a dissertation on his merits as an artist, let me enlist your sympathy with Chardin the man.

Chardin, born in Paris in 1699, was the son of a cabinetmaker, or to be more precise, a billiard-table maker to the king. Of his youth we know little, save that his father gave him but a commonplace education, wishing him to continue in his own trade. The boy, however, had particular leanings towards art, and was at last permitted to enter the studio of Cazes, the "peintre du Roi," who, as Goncourt says, was very much in vogue at that time though he was too poor to afford models. Chardin consequently studied as best

he could without any reference to nature, and, as might be expected, eventually quitted Cazes' studio not much wiser than when he had entered there. Left to his own resources, there would have been little hope for him had his genius not been directed into the right channel by a piece of luck.

Noël Nicholas Coypel, a well-known painter, of whose work I give you a specimen here (see Plate 11), merely to show how unlike his conception of art was to that developed by Chardin—Coypel I say, required an assistant. He was then at work on a certain portrait, and required Chardin to paint in a gun: the portrait was that of a

Original in the Louvre.

Photo. Neurdein.

NOËL. NICHOLAS COYPEL.

VENUS, BACCHUS AND CUPID.

sportsman. Much to Chardin's astonishment Coypel took great trouble in polishing up the barrel and placing the gun in the desired position—for Chardin had not been used to seeing so much care bestowed on a mere matter of detail; moreover, he had never painted from nature—if one may use the expression in this case. This was a revelation to Chardin, who henceforward never painted unless by direct reference to nature. There is seemingly no definite record of his further activity except we know that he acted as a sort of journeyman assistant, employed, for instance, in helping to restore the Fontainebleau Gallery, at 4s. per day, under Van Loo.

All this sounds very commonplace. There is no hint of a grand passion, like that of Watteau's for the dancer "La Montague," no suggestion of a licentious life like that of Boucher; Chardin, the artisan's son, appears as an honest hard-working craftsman. But although his genius was destined to show itself in this guise for the rest of his life, he suddenly won notoriety in a commonplace way; a shop-sign painted for a friend of his father's brought him his first laurels. That sign is lost, so there would be not much reason for giving a description of it, but for the fact that it disposes of a legend connected with his art. The sign represented a scene after a duel: a wounded dueller outside the surgery,

the surgeon in attendance and an excited crowd around him. This sign created quite a sensation in the street, much to the dismay of the surgeon himself, who, unaware that the sign had already been put up, wondered at the cause of the sudden conflux.

The next we hear of Chardin is that he exhibited several pictures at a curious annual open-air exhibition on the Place Dauphine, which lasted only two hours. Among the pictures was a still life representing a bronze-relief, which was bought by Van Loo, his former employer. On the occasion of another similar exhibition in 1728, his pictures were so much admired that the Academicians who had been inspecting them at first out of mere

curiosity were so delighted, that they resolved to invite him to join the Academy as a member, and there and then went in search of him and pressed him to "present" himself, which he did. The story goes that on the auspicious "Day of Presentation" he displayed ten pictures in the anteroom which the Academicians had to pass, and kept himself in the background. The Academicians, entering one by one, were charmed with the work, which they took to be "d'un bon peintre flamand" (by a good Flemish artist). Thus Chardin became in this same year, 1728, a Royal Academician. The "Interieur de Cuisine" and "Fruits sur une Table de Pierre, et Animaux" were his

"Diploma" pictures: they are still in the Louvre.

Chardin married in 1731; but his wife, after four years of a happy life, died and left him with one son. I must not linger too long on personal matters, but I think I should mention a trait of his character which brings the man nearer to our hearts. As is usual in France, his wife was chosen for him by his parents—it is more a matter of business—remember Greuze's picture. He liked the girl—whom he was made to meet at a dance—well enough, but being then unable to support her, her father would not give his consent. When at last, after the lapse of several years, he was in

a position to marry, the girl was ruined in fortune—then it was his father who objected; but, as the French chronicler naïvely remarks, he generously kept his word.

Another glimpse of his character is afforded us by the following anecdote. One day Chardin was just putting the finishing touches on a picture when his friend Le Bas entered. "By Jove," said Le Bas, "that is a jolly fine picture; I should like to buy it." "We can come to terms, no doubt," replied Chardin; "that is a jolly nice waistcoat you have on." So Le Bas parted with his waistcoat and Chardin with his picture. As a rule, however, Chardin would not allow anyone to visit him in his quaint

garret studio, into which the silvery daylight floated, resting with unexpected tenderness on bottles, saucepans, cabbages, fish, glasses, bread, carrots, white table-cloths, and all the hundred modest inspirers of his wonderful art. His dislike for visitors gave rise to the legend that he produced his effects by trickery, the secrets of which he would not disclose. It was said that he painted with his thumb. Nothing of the kind was true. He was an exceedingly slow worker, and he did not wish anyone to watch the infinite labour and trouble he bestowed on every picture. This fact, and the little story of Le Bas' waistcoat, shews that a man like him was not likely to make money, in

further proof of which I might mention the case of Madame Victoire—the King's sister—who, taking a fancy to one of Chardin's pastel portraits (a branch of art which he took up later in life, and as a brilliant specimen of which his beautiful "Portrait of a Lady" (see Plate 12) may be cited), wished to purchase it. Chardin begged her to accept it from him as a token of his gratitude for her interest in his work.

In spite of his success (he was made Councillor to the Academy, and later, Treasurer; he received a pension of 800, then 1200 livres, with an official residence in the Louvre), he always remained singularly modest. He used to say, "Art is an island,

Original in the Louvre. Photo. Neurdein.

J.-B.-S. CHARDIN.
A PASTEL PORTRAIT.

of which I have only skirted the coast line." He was fatherly in his manner towards young people and indulgent with beginners. "He who has never realised the difficulties of art will never produce anything of value, and he who, like my son, has realised these difficulties too late, will produce nothing at all." There is a hint of a great tragedy in this mention of his talented son, the hope of his old age, who (possibly) drowned himself in Venice. He had married again in 1744, and lived happily with his second wife, who survived him.

The last great honour bestowed upon him was the membership of the Academy of Rouen.

He died in 1779 at the ripe age of

80, his last years somewhat clouded by the shadow of neglect which had fallen upon his too often repeated subjects, and the torture of a painful illness which had attacked him.

This, in rough outline, was his life, certainly not a very eventful one, and after all, as things go, not an unhappy one. For his genius had almost from the beginning of his career received full and wide acknowledgment. I doubt very much whether a painter of to-day would have, under similar circumstances, enjoyed such recognition during his lifetime. Viewed together with the other manifestations of art in his age, his must have seemed rough, uncouth and almost ridiculously unpretentious.

To the everlasting honour of that century be it said, that though there was much wrong with it morally, it was certainly an age of keenest intellect. The weakness of the age is that, freed from the fetters of a despotic monarch, it misapplies, in the first wild joy of possession, its regained liberty of thought, its freedom of action.

Let us, however, return to Chardin and enquire a little deeper into the nature of his life-work.

If Watteau was by nature a dreamer, Chardin was by nature a thinker; a philosopher whose aim was not to discover a new truth, but to understand the obvious. Not the complexities of life but its sim-

plicity was to him a source of daily wonder and admiration. We can therefore understand how it is that he extracted so much beauty even from inanimate things. For as Goncourt truly observes: "Chardin loves—nay more—he respects what he paints." In other words, Chardin, like his countryman, Le Nain, a hundred years before him, like the Dutch painters, like Velasquez, receives his inspiration from without; Botticelli, Raphael, Michelangelo, Rubens, Watteau are inspired from within. Ultimately these two conceptions of art, which may be distinguished throughout, are based on the two different conceptions of life, the scientific and the romantic.

Original in the National Gallery

Photo. Mansell-Anderson

William van Mieris

Cook and Parrot

Chardin, as a scientific thinker, filled with the profoundest respect for everything that *is*, that exists, approaches a child, a cat, a fish, a cabbage, a jug with sympathy and admiration, differing in kind but not in degree. This sounds extravagant; it is none the less true. The majority of painters would not think of bestowing the same degree of attention and care on what are commonly called accessories. On the other hand, there are quite a number of painters who give the same degree of attention to all things but do not know how to vary the kind—and then this (see Plate 13) is the result.

This is a picture by Willem van

Mieris, a Dutch artist of the seventeenth century (it is in the National Gallery). A wonderful piece of craftsmanship, full of the most elaborate detail, every thread in the curtain, every hair on the rabbits, every vein in the cabbage, every feather of pheasant, duck and plovers (I hope they are plovers), every scale of the fish seems to have been painted separately, and equally minute finish to have been given to cat and man and woman; but surely the live beings look no more animated than the still life, and the figures in the sculptured stone are as much alive as cat, cook and fishmonger. Is the glossy iridescence of a bird's plumage the same as the moist slipperiness

Original in the Rijks Museum, Amsterdam. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

WILLEM VAN KALF.
STILL-LIFE.

of a fish's scales? Is the rough texture of a woollen blanket not different from the soft downiness of a rabbit's fur? Is the whiteness of a fair skin to be compared with the whiteness of a starched cap? Mieris has not relaxed his attention for one minute, he has given the same degree of attention to all things, but also the same kind of attention.

If we compare van Kalf's (see Plate 14), the great Dutch still-life painter's, work with this, we notice the difference at once: without varying the degree, he has paid the proper kind of attention to each of the different objects—he has done justice to their essential

qualities as expressed by their surfaces.

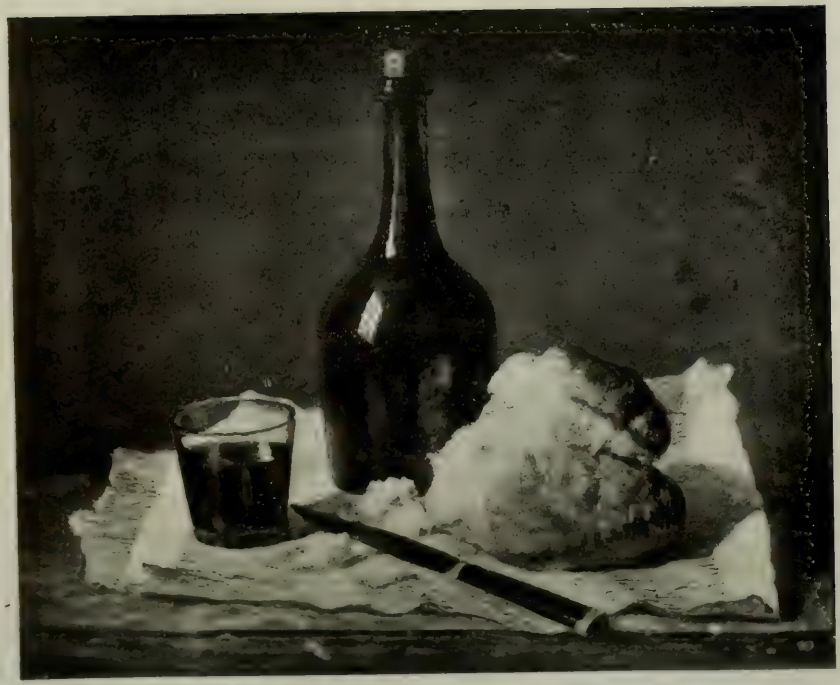
Chardin goes still further; he considers the refractive qualities of the atmosphere, by which every object is made to surrender a part of its tone and colour to its neighbours (see Plate 15)—and still a step further: the Dutch artists had painted their still-lives for the mere pleasure of painting. The arrangement is, and looks, intentional; affected, as one might say. Not so with Chardin. As Lady Dilke admirably says: "By some touch or suggestion Chardin invariably contrives to fix a personal character on his groups of inanimate objects; they never seem to have been brought together by haphazard, but always

Original in the Louvre.

Photo. Neurdein.

J.-B.-S. Chardin.
Still-Life.

Plate 15.



Original in the National Gallery. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

J.-B.-S. Chardin.

Still-Life.

Plate 16.

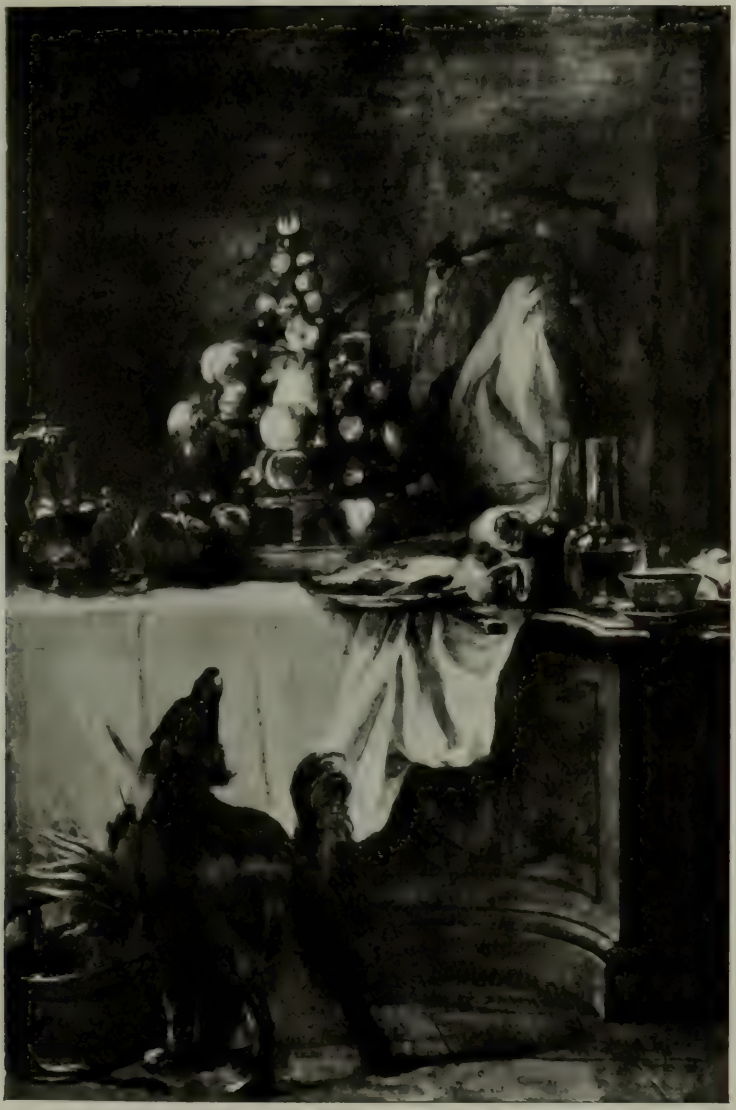
look as if some one had just left them or was just coming back. So strong is the impression of the human presence that we pass from work, in which it is simply felt, to work in which it becomes visible without any lively sense of change.

It is worth your while to go to the National Gallery, if only to study this (see Plate 16) little still-life of his there. The subject is as simple as can be, but what an object lesson it is. The craftsmanship, every painter will tell you, is supreme, almost Velasquezish in execution; but apart from that it is filled with Chardin's personality. This is not merely a loaf of bread, a glass of wine, a common table knife; it is

the loaf, *the* glass and *the* knife Chardin had been using: why, the very glass has the appearance of such doubtful cleanliness as is invariably found in studio utensils.

When he introduces a living creature, as in this (see Plate 17) picture of his in the Louvre, we are immediately made aware of its presence. Think of the cat in van Mieris's picture, and the difference will at once reveal itself to you.

How much more must his pictures gain in interest when they embrace also the human element. Let us consider this (see Plate 2) picture, "La Pourvoyeuse," because you have seen an original of it yourself



Original in the Louvre. Photo. Neurdein.

J.-B.-S. CHARDIN.
STILL-LIFE AND DOG.
(LE BUFFET.)

Original at Dulwich College. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

J.-B.-S. Chardin.
The Sewing School.

in this Exhibition. The picture is as unassuming as any still-life—and one could scarcely call it a sentimental one—sentimental in its original meaning. Yet is it really devoid of sentiment, of feeling? Does not the pose, or artistically speaking, the action of the girl's figure betray the weight of the burden she has brought home; does not the turn of her head shew that, bustling maid that she is, she has already seen something which requires her attention? Or take this (see Plate 18) curious little picture, much darkened and damaged though it appears: a number of girls and women employed with needlework. It is not only interesting to study the different poses, but also the

thoughts of which they are expressive.

People have not always been so appreciative of his work; in fact towards the end of his life the critics became somewhat tired of it. It is not astonishing then that many of his pictures have been carelessly kept, badly hung and wrongly catalogued. This (see Plate 19) charming picture, badly hung in the Liechtenstein Collection at Vienna, is catalogued as "A Cook peeling a lemon." As a matter of fact she is peeling an egg, still holding the spoon in her hand, with which she had taken it out of the saucepan. The grace and charm with which he knew to invest these

Original in the Liechtenstein Gallery, Vienna. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

J.-B.-S. CHARDIN.
PEELING AN EGG.

Original in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

J.-B.-S. Chardin.

At the Wash Tub.

Plate 20.

Original in the Louvre. Photo. Neurdein.

J.-B.-S. CHARDIN.

GRACE BEFORE MEAT.

girls and women of the Bourgeoisie is extraordinary, because so entirely unaffected; yet he exceeded that even in his rendering of child life. Though peculiar in technique and perhaps suffering from the relentless tooth of time this (see Plate 20) picture from the Hermitage in St. Petersburg is a splendid witness of his delight in the quiet humour of home and child life. Look however at the following picture (see Plate 21): "Grace before Meat." If there is anyone to whom this does not appeal he is poor indeed, though he owned the world.

"I know of no one before him," says Muther, "who has painted the unconscious spiritual life of the child with such discreet tenderness, the

little hands that grasp at something, the lips that a mother loves to kiss, the dreamy, wide-open, young eyes;" in this Chardin is master.

Or look at this (see Plate 22) other one. A little boy whom his mother is just getting ready for school: a woman, a boy, a chair, a work-basket with needlework accessories, battledore and shuttlecock, cards, a table with an open drawer, and a hat—that is the picture; but thanks to Chardin's genius it is infinitely more: a perfect idyll of motherly love.

Apart from the subject matter one can also study and admire here Chardin's brushwork, broad and yet subtle, and the beauty of the com-

Original in the Liechtenstein Gallery, Vienna. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

J.-B.-S. CHARDIN.
MOTHER AND SON.

Original in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

J.-B.-S. CHARDIN.

A BOY PLAYING WITH CARDS.

Original in the Liechtenstein Gallery, Vienna. Photo. Hanfstaengl.

J.-B.-S. CHARDIN.
PEELING TURNIPS.

position, with its masses of light and shade, and transparent half light, the more beautiful as it looks so purely accidental. There is another similar subject of which the same may be said. Chardin scorns all artificial means, all *haut-goût* and other kinds of palate tickling, then almost everywhere the order of the day. This (see Plate 23) picture of a boy seen in profile only, playing with cards, we can enjoy so simple a subject even as this. It is, I believe, one of his earliest pictures, rather smoother in texture than his usual style. But even a comparatively early work such as this (see Plate 24) next one, from the Liechtenstein Gallery, dated 1738,

shews the general characteristics of his method.

And here I must mention a legend to which I referred earlier. It was said that Chardin never took up figure painting until he was well over thirty. The story goes that Chardin one day was painting in the studio of his friend Aved, when a lady entered who wished Aved to paint her. The sum she offered was 400 livres. Aved thought the amount insufficient, whereupon Chardin—not used to high prices—pressed his friend not to let such an opportunity go by. Aved, seeing Chardin employed on his usual still-life, this time a picture with sausages on a dish, sarcastically remarked, "I would

not mind doing it if it were as easy as painting sausages." Nettled by this, Chardin is supposed to have devoted himself thenceforward to painting figure subjects. But the truth of this anecdote is destroyed by the fact that his very first picture, "The Surgeon's Signboard," was crowded with figures.

Chardin, so far as I can make out, exhibited something less than 150 pictures during the whole of his life. The subjects were, as we have seen in a few good specimens, unpretentious; his types of women are not beautiful, scarcely even good looking. What is there then to account for the extraordinary fascination his pictures exercise over all who

have once recognised it? Chardin's infinite sympathy with the thing seen, with life lived.

To a friend, who once enquired of him the secret of his art, who wanted to find out what sort of colours he painted with—and Chardin had indeed a scientific knowledge of the chemical properties of pigments—to him Chardin had replied: "Friend, one does not paint with colours, one uses them; but one paints with feeling." Plain, ordinary facts of life furnish us, if we be so minded, with ample food for thought.

It is no mere accident that this painter of daylight was of a contemplative and sympathising nature, any more than it is an accident that

this quiet and philosophic man was a painter of daylight. The two characteristics are interdependent. Quiet, well balanced, sympathetic natures are not usually self-centred.

Watteau, as we know, was a dreamer, and a sick man at that; Boucher was a stupendously active Hedonist. Neither of these two natures could be anything but egotistical, self-centred. Common truths, the simplicities of life, would not enter into their minds; daylight is nothing to those who see everything under the lime-light of their own personality.

Chardin had a philosophical, a scientific mind, which taught him that the most commonplace things

are full of mystery and wonder. The atmosphere, which surrounds us everywhere and from which we draw the very breath of our lives, has the property of linking all objects in this our world together. White is white, and blue is blue, only in so far as surrounding light, surrounding atmosphere, surrounding objects will permit it. Green, grey or red mean very little by themselves, just as great or good or bad are undefined expressions until we know exactly by what standard they are to be measured, until we know their surroundings. Chardin's reds and greens reflect and react mutually, just as we are affected by and take the hue of our surroundings—to a certain degree.

Self-centred men give us their self, and if that self be worthy all is well, and we are happy to possess the works of a Botticelli, a Michelangelo, a Rubens, or a Watteau; if that self be faulty, we regret the common sensuality of a Boucher; we puzzle our heads over the art of a William Blake; we wonder at the extravaganzas of a Beardsley. Unselfish men, like a Velasquez, like a Chardin, give us the truth of the day, and we are amazed and delighted to find that so much beauty is ever before our eyes, had we only the ability to discover it, as they do it for us.

We can now understand why Chardin's art was so different from that of his contemporaries. In an age

of unparalleled nervous activity, where every fibre seemed strained, where the old order was fast going to perdition, and a new epoch preparing with ever-increasing force, Chardin alone, in the domain of art, remained an unperturbed guardian of the truth of every day. And if Goncourt aptly says that the whole secret, the whole talent of Chardin was the possession of science and conscience, I should like to add that all the best that has ever been done by man, for man, has been achieved wholly and solely by science and conscience, by true knowledge and true love.

Printed at the University Press, Glasgow.

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